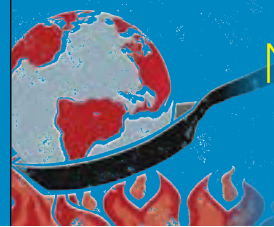




WHAT BREXIT WILL MEAN

How workers
will be affected
>>Pages 10&11



BRAZIL FLOODS— NEW WARNING OF CLIMATE CHAOS

PLUS Preparing for climate
school strikes >>Pages 3&5

Socialist Worker

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VICTIM OF RACIST ATTACK IN EDINBURGH SPEAKS OUT

'PROTEST AGAINST RACISM'

**They abused us,
calling us 'Pakis'
and asking, 'Why
are you here?'**

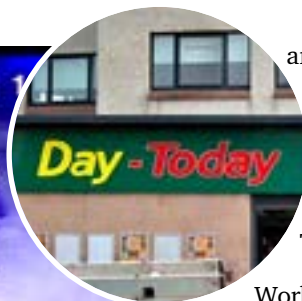
Nadeem Akbar
Edinburgh

AN ASIAN man who was viciously beaten up in Edinburgh has called on people to "please come and protest" against racism.

A group of 20 people armed with crowbars and a knife assaulted and hurled racist abuse at shop managers Nadeem Akbar



CCTV FOOTAGE from outside Nadeem's shop



and Mudassar Akbar on Thursday of last week. Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) Edinburgh called a protest outside Craigmillar Library for this Thursday.

Nadeem told Socialist Worker that "we were lucky" to make it out from the assault. "We've got a shop on Hay Avenue," he said. "We park our cars behind the shop."

"But the car park is a blind spot. As soon as we got to the car park they started abusing us, calling us 'Pakis' and asking, 'Why

>>Page 4

WHAT WE THINK

Get Trump's hands off Palestine

"WE WILL make history," said Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu ahead of an announcement by Donald Trump on Tuesday. One way or another, that's almost certainly true.

After years of build-up, Trump was finally set to release his "deal of the century", touted as a "peace settlement" between Israel and the Palestinians.

In reality it's a green light to Israel to grab all but a few tiny scraps of what remains of Palestine.

Socialist Worker went to press before the big reveal.

But several reports say the plan involves annexing more than 100 Israeli settlements built in the West



Palestinians will not give in to Trump

Bank since Israel invaded and occupied it in 1967.

Much of the land between the settlements is also said to go to Israel, as is East Jerusalem which is also under military occupation.

And the Jordan Valley is likely to remain under some form of Israeli military control.

Any Palestinian state—if there is to be a state at all—will be built on the fragments of land that are left.

It will be completely under the thumb of Israel, militarily and economically.

There will be no justice for the Palestinians who have been robbed of their land and oppressed

>>Page 5



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'You either are or you're not'

Thomas Woodcock, an adviser to the Queen, explains how royalty works

'There are only so many times you can be called a Tory bastard before you just think, Oh, I'll become a Tory bastard'

'Comedian' Geoff Norcott is a Tory bastard

'This coin marks the beginning of this new chapter'

Sajid Javid launching the Brexit 50p, it is the third such coin after previous versions were melted down last year

'Sorry, you'll just have to get your mops & buckets ready!'

US president Donald Trump says no to flood defences for New York

'We declare that anything that's been conceived in satanic wombs, that it will miscarry'

Trump's spiritual adviser Paula White



Bare faced cheek of London cops spying on everyone

THE METROPOLITAN police has announced it will use live facial recognition cameras operationally for the first time on London streets.

They claim for now, the technology will be primarily used to find suspects wanted for serious or violent crime.

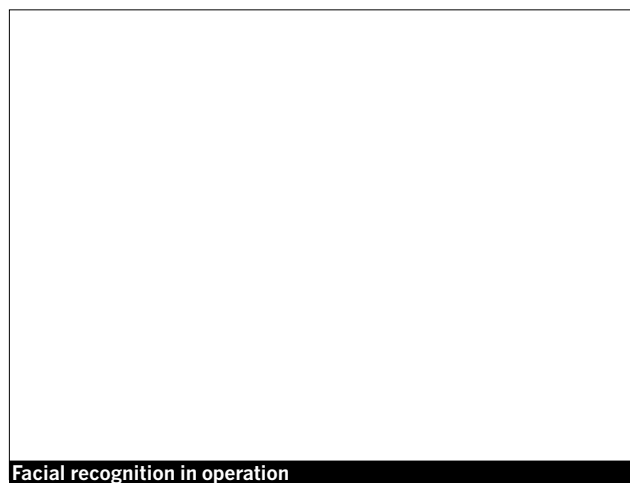
But who would believe in the honest intentions of the Metropolitan police?

The deployment undoubtedly takes surveillance to a new level.

The European Union is considering a temporary ban on the use of facial recognition to safeguard individuals' rights.

The Met goes to great lengths to stress that it has taken a "considerate and transparent" approach.

Transparent is hardly what it was when it shared months



Facial recognition in operation

of facial recognition data with the owners of King's Cross train station without telling anyone in 2016.

The Met said the system was 70 percent effective at spotting wanted suspects and

falsely identified someone as wanted in one in a thousand cases.

But Professor Pete Fussey—an expert on surveillance from Essex University who conducted the only

independent review of the Met's public trials on behalf of the force—found it was verifiably accurate in just 19 percent of cases.

The technology is better at matching white men than other groups. That holds up the possibility of the cops prejudices being upheld with false matches.

When cops used the technology at the Notting Hill Carnival they misidentified 95 people.

In the US Twitter and Google are in a legal battle with Clearview who market one type of facial recognition software.

The fight is not in defence of privacy but rather over who has the right to use all the photos people upload to social media as a database in order to sell it to the cops and others.

SIR RICHARD Branson's Virgin healthcare group has not paid a penny in corporation tax while being handed £2 billion worth of NHS and local authority deals. The Virgin Healthcare Services turnover was £248.8 million last year. It made a profit of £503,000. A potential corporation tax bill of just under £96,000 was wiped out by losses made in other group companies.

Richard Branson

FORMER chancellor Philip Hammond has joined financial tech firm OakNorth. Hammond will become a member of the SoftBank-backed firm's advisory board. The ex-Treasury boss will join OakNorth's board alongside Francis Maude and Lord Turner.

Bookies 'looking after' vulnerable gamblers

WHO BETTER to look at ways to strengthen safeguards designed to protect vulnerable people with gambling problems than bookies.

The Gambling Commission has set up three working groups. One group, which will examine how the industry can better design products to mitigate the risks posed to problem gamblers, is led by SG Gaming and Playtech.

SG Gaming is one of the companies that manufactured hardware and software for fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs). Playtech's designs include software used by FOBTs.

The second group will examine VIP incentives.



Addictive

It will be led by GVC, owner of Ladbrokes, which showed a problem gambler with gifts as he bet £1 million of stolen money.

The third group will look at advertising online and will be led by Sky Bet. They were fined after allowing hundreds of people to keep betting after they asked to be barred from doing so, while sending promotional material to 50,000 more.

Did Sunday People spy on murdered girl's family?

PRIVATE detectives were hired by the Sunday People newspaper to target the family of the murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler in 2002.

Private investigators at a company, Starbase, are alleged to have been hired by executives at the newspaper as police tried to find Milly.

One of the Sunday People's rivals, the News of the World, closed in 2011 after the revelation that an investigator working for it had hacked the schoolgirl's phone.

But the new legal documents, lodged in the High Court in November also allege that the Sunday People placed



Neil Wallis

the Dowler family under "unlawful" surveillance before later publishing an article 10 days after the teenager disappeared.

Neil Wallis was the editor of the Sunday People before going on to become the deputy editor of the News of the World.

In 2015 he was cleared of conspiracy to hack phones at the News of the World.

Prince builds up his air miles

PRINCE CHARLES took three private jet flights in 11 days as he lectured world leaders on climate change.

The royal has reportedly racked up a whopping 16,000 air miles and also took a helicopter ride before meeting climate activist Greta Thunberg.

The jaunt cost £280,000.

An empty jet went from Vienna to Scotland to collect him, before he was flown to Muscat to pay his respects to the new Sultan of Oman.

That jet was then flown back without the prince to its base in Vienna.

A new plane was then dispatched from Luton Airport to collect Charles from Muscat so a fresh crew could take him to the queen's estate in Sandringham for royal crisis talks. The queen's helicopter was then dispatched from Hampshire to collect him from Sandringham. The chopper took him back to Scotland, it then carried on back to its base in Hampshire.

He then took a 750-mile journey by private jet from Scotland to Davos. Later that same day he took another flight tallying up a further 1,740 air miles as he headed to Israel.



Cop had sex with victims

ANTHONY LUMB a Sussex police inspector is guilty of gross misconduct for having sex with vulnerable women, including a victim of hate crime and an offender who had been issued with a caution.

Lumb was dismissed after the hearing. Lumb was accused of engaging in sex while on duty with five women, and the panel found accusations proven in respect of four of those cases.

Nicola Brookes waived her right to anonymity. She has Crohn's disease and met Lumb after being the victim of a disability hate crime.

She will continue to pursue a civil claim against Sussex police. She said "It has been a long, painful three years. I knew I was right. I feel like I was the one who has been on trial for three years. It goes on so I haven't got closure yet."

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'Lives were ruined and we want justice for Grenfell'

by GABBY THORPE

"LIVES WERE ruined and we want justice," a former Grenfell resident told Socialist Worker on Monday. He was speaking as the second phase of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry got underway.

The corporations and politicians to blame for the fire that took 72 lives in 2017 are hoping to avoid scrutiny. Even inquiry lawyers have condemned them.

Richard Millett, counsel to the inquiry, said that none of the organisations involved "took the slightest bit of responsibility" for their involvement in the fire.

Survivors and families of victims gathered outside the venue on Monday morning to demand justice.

"Phase one of the inquiry told us that the cladding was to blame for the fire spreading," said the Grenfell resident.

"We knew that. Now someone needs to be held responsible. The companies that did this don't want to admit it. But that's not good enough," he added.

The hearings on Monday began with statements from the contractors who were responsible for the tower's refurbishment between 2014 and 2016.

Cladding

The companies making statements included Arconic, which provided the cladding. The inquiry heard that Arconic was aware, as far back as 2011, that the cladding was not safe.

The cladding allegedly performed worse in testing than was declared on safety certificates.

These accusations were made by lawyers for Rydon—the main contractor on the refurbishment. They argued that, although they were in charge, they could not accept "moral culpability" for the fire because they



PROTESTERS GATHERED as the second part of the Grenfell inquiry began on Monday

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

BACK STORY

The Grenfell Tower fire in west London killed 72 people in 2017

- The second phase of an official inquiry into the fire began in London on Monday of this week
- Phase one looked at the fire's immediate causes and the authorities' response on the night
- It concluded that cladding was responsible—but didn't look at why the cladding was there
- People living in Grenfell weren't kept safe because of racism and contempt for working class people

worked with different parties. The hearings began in the wake of the resignation of inquiry panelist Benita Mehra. Mehra—appointed by Boris Johnson—was head of the Women's Engineering Society.

The organisation received a £71,000 grant from Arconic.

Families have welcomed the resignation, but many still worry that the inquiry will fail to deliver justice.

Survivors' group Justice4Grenfell said the inquiry must address the institutional discrimination that led to the disaster.

Aisha Mohamed, who lost her aunt and two nieces in the fire, said that "social class" was the main cause of

the disaster. Nabil Choucair, who also lost family in the fire, said, "This never would've happened to upper class people."

The inquiry process will not deliver the justice that the Grenfell victims and their families deserve. It's right to keep fighting to demand that those affected by the fire are rehoused in safe and secure homes now.

It's also right to keep protesting over the contempt for ordinary people that goes right to the top.

What's your story?

Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

New Tory migrant attack

THE TORIES have sacked the author of a report into Britain's immigration system—for not being brutal enough towards migrants.

Professor Alan Manning revealed that the government had rejected his application to serve for a second term as chair of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) on Tuesday.

His announcement came at the launch of the MAC's report into the Tories' proposals for an "Australian-style points-based immigration system" after Brexit.

This would make a false division between "skilled" and "low skilled migrants", put up more barriers to migrants and make life harder for the poorest once they got to Britain.

Manning said the proposals were "likely to reduce future growth" of the "economy compared to freedom of movement".

But defending migrants' rights should not be framed in terms of what's good for bosses' profits.

The left should respond with arguments for working class unity.



Boris Johnson targets migrants

Tomáš Tengely-Evans

BRAZIL

Crisis after floods and landslides

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

OVER 50 people have been killed and tens of thousands displaced from their homes after floods and landslides hit Brazil. The country has recorded its heaviest rainfall in 110 years.

Authorities called a state of emergency in 47 cities across the state of Minas Gerais last Sunday.

The crisis comes a year after the collapse of a dam at an iron ore mine in the same region, which claimed the lives of 270 people.

Some 16 people have been charged with murder.

They include the former chief executive of Vale, the firm that owns the mine and dam.

The incident was foreseeable and could have been avoided. But bosses put profit before safety.

Extreme

Extreme weather events such as the floods in Minas Gerais are becoming more common across the globe.

Yet profit-hungry companies continue to exploit the planet.

And many politicians, such as Brazil's right wing president Jair Bolsonaro, are giving them the green light.

Big business and their enablers in government are accelerating the climate crisis.

The latest floods show that the human cost of the crisis is only getting greater.

Everyone should join the next climate strike on 14 February, and mobilising meetings for the Cop26 climate conference in Scotland.

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Send 'start' to the number

JOIN THE SCHOOL CLIMATE STRIKES

Friday 14 February
Friday 13 March
Take action in schools, colleges and workplaces

To find details of a strike near you see ukscn.org/events





‘Protest at racism’ says Edinburgh man hit with a crowbar

>>>continued from page 1

are you here?.” As the racists hit Nadeem, they repeatedly punched Mudassar in the face and nose.

“I think three of them had crowbars and one a knife,” he said. “They hit me on the side of my head, across my forehead in fact.

“They showed the knife and tried to burst the tyres.”

The assault only stopped after the intervention of one of Nadeem and Mudassar’s customers.

Nadeem said, “One of my customers started shouting and then the gang moved on.

“Two of my colleagues were inside serving and they called 999 afterwards.”

Nadeem explained that the brothers had previously suffered abuse at the hands of racists.

“This hassle was going on with lads for a couple of months,” he said. “It was bullying, racism and asking, ‘Why are you here’.

“They would just come to the shop and start throwing things.”

He added that in the “last couple of months the abuse was worse” with the gang. Nadeem said that a gang had attempted to assault him before.

“They tried one time about three to four weeks ago,” he said.

“They had a wooden stick that time, but I just went back into the shop.”



Years of scapegoating against Muslims, migrants and refugees pushed by politicians and the press have normalised and



legitimised racist ideas in wider society.

A statement from SUTR Scotland said, “Given the language and racist slurs used, there is little doubt that this assault was racially motivated.

“This is not the first violent attack recently to be accompanied by racist abuse from the perpetrators.

“In May 2018 a Syrian refugee, Shabaz Ali, sustained life threatening injuries in a racially aggravated attempted murder in Edinburgh.

“The attacker reportedly said, ‘Go back to your country’.”

Anti-racists need to show solidarity swiftly in the wake of violent attacks and fight against the division pushed by politicians.

The SUTR Scotland statement added, “Millions of people across Scotland are opposed to racism and we have a proud record of combatting it.

“We must organise in our communities, our workplaces and on campus to isolate and challenge racism wherever it rears its ugly head.”

SUTR has called national demonstrations in Glasgow and London on Saturday 21 March. They are an opportunity to build a bigger movement against racism.

They will bring together people from across the Labour Party, Scottish National Party (SNP), Greens, trade unionists, revolutionary socialists, anti-racists, Muslim and refugee and migrant organisations and others.

They must be a focus for the coming assaults from an emboldened Tory government.



A MEETING in south London, one of many called to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day

‘Campaign in every way we know how’ for safety of child refugees

LABOUR PEER Alf Dubs has urged campaigners to “use every means possible to keep up pressure” after Tory MPs voted to dump protections for child refugees.

Tory MPs threw out Dubs’ amendment to the Brexit deal—previously passed by the Lords—last week.

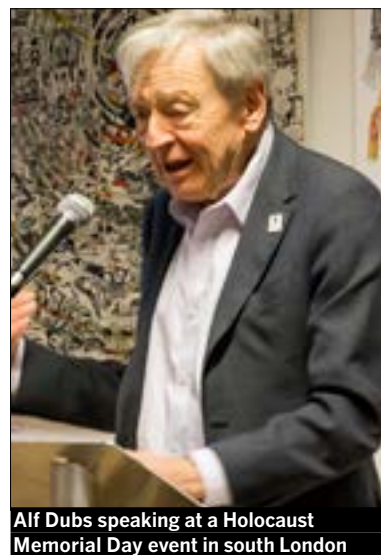
It would have kept European Union (EU) regulations that allow some child refugees to join family members in Britain.

Dubs told Socialist Worker, “We’ve got to use every means possible and campaign in every way we know how.”

He slammed the Tory government’s measure as “mean and nasty”, warning that it would push child refugees to take more dangerous routes.

“I’m happy to be campaigning for child refugees because they’re part of what the government is against and the way the government has been behaving,” he said.

“Who can stand up and oppose a child wanting to be united with



Alf Dubs speaking at a Holocaust Memorial Day event in south London

their family in Britain, whether it’s an uncle or aunt, sibling or whatever?

“It makes us out to be mean and nasty as a country and I believe most people will say, ‘Yes we can take some more’.” The EU’s Dublin Regulation

says refugees should apply for asylum in the first member state they arrive in and allows other member states to turn them away.

One exception is for unaccompanied child refugees who already have a family member in another country.

The Tories’ move will force more child refugees to take more dangerous routes to make it to safety in Britain—and cause more deaths.

Dubs said, “What we want is a legal path to safety and the government have turned their back on it.

“The traffickers will see what they can do to help children cross the English Channel on boats and the back of a lorry.

“It’s shocking because these are dangerous journeys—kids have got killed on them.”

Anti-racists have to build a movement to force the Tories to open the border and let refugees in safely.

Health workers demand, ‘axe the migrant checks’

HEALTH workers and campaigners gathered in east London last Saturday to discuss how to build the fight against racist ID checks and charges for migrants in the NHS.

Around 100 people joined the Patients Not Passports conference in Bethnal Green.

It was sponsored by a range of groups, including Docs Not Cops, Medact, Migrants Organise and Tower Hamlets Stand Up To Racism.

At the opening plenary Aliya from the Migrants Organise forum slammed the Tories’ scapegoating of migrants.

She said, “Over the last few years you’ve seen the growth of the hostile environment in this country.

“Our NHS and public services have become a new frontier in border control.

“Everyone who has been turned into a border guard, we have to turn into a campaigner.”

Migrants from outside the European Union have to pay a health surcharge on top of visa fees before coming to Britain. Those who do not have indefinite leave to remain can be charged up front for treatment.

This means hospital bosses have to determine who is liable for upfront charges, leading to racial profiling.

Migrants with health conditions, including infectious or life-threatening ones, can fear coming forward for treatment.

And by restricting health care for some of the most vulnerable migrants, it’s another stepping stone to undermining free

health care for the wider population.

East London has been at the centre of the fights to stop checks and charges for migrants.

Hospital bosses in the borough were making up to 100 enquiries a week to the Home Office about patients, as revealed by Socialist Worker in the summer of 2018.

This process involves passing “demographic information”—name, date of birth and address—to immigration officials who could then use it to deport people.

Health campaigners forced Barts Health NHS Trust to drop passport checks in September 2018.

At several workshops, activists shared how they had they could spread the fight across Britain.

Protesters at fascist reading

AROUND 70 people protested outside the public reading of a fascist book in Vauxhall, south London, last Sunday.

Supporters of Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) and London Anti-fascist Assembly organised the protest outside the Tea Rooms Theatre.

Around eight people joined a reading of Benito Mussolini’s Doctrine of Fascism inside.

It came on the day before the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and Holocaust Memorial Day.

Meanwhile, fascists sprayed antisemitic graffiti onto a Barclays



PROTESTING IN Vauxhall

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

bank in Bexleyheath, south east London.

It shows the Star of David, the far right’s Celtic cross and the letters “WP”—white power.

A Holocaust Memorial Day event was held in south east London on Monday.

STAND UP TO RACISM EVENTS

TRADE UNION CONFERENCE

Sat 8 February, 11am, Soas, London, WC1H

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST RACISM

Sat 21 March, London and Glasgow

For more information go to standuptoracism.org.uk



Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

TRUMP DEAL MEANS END OF ‘TWO-STATE SOLUTION’

>>>continued from front by Israel ever since its creation in 1948.

Trump has been building towards this since 2017 when he declared Jerusalem the “capital of Israel.”

This effectively approved Israel’s claim to the whole of the city.

He followed up on that by accepting Israel’s annexation of the Golan Heights, which it stole from Syria in 1967.

Most recently his secretary of state Mike Pompeo declared last November that the US considers Israel’s West Bank settlements to be legal.

All of this has already encouraged Israel to tighten the screws on Palestinians.

It increased settlement building in anticipation of Trump’s deal—as well as demolitions and land grabs.

Violent Israeli settlers have stepped up their attacks on Palestinian villages and farmers in a bid to drive them from the land.

Meanwhile the Israeli government passed a law in 2018 denying citizenship to non-Jewish residents of Israel.

Many Palestinian activists now say they face a “new Nakba”—a catastrophe as significant as their

expulsion in 1948.

Trump said on Monday that if the Palestinian Authority (PA) doesn’t agree, the deal won’t go ahead.

But he added, “In the end they’re going to want it. It’s very good for them.”

Does that mean if the PA doesn’t accept it, Trump will hold Israel back? Or is it—as seems more likely—a threat?

Some reports say that if the PA doesn’t accept the deal, Trump will allow Israel to annex whatever it wants.

Whatever happens, Trump’s deal should be the final nail in the coffin of the “two-state solution”—the idea that there could be a state of

A single, secular state with equal rights for Arabs and Jews is the only just solution

AN ASSEMBLY OF INACTION

AROUND 150 people have begun the process of kick-starting Britain’s first “climate assembly”.

They are set to meet, discuss—and eventually recommend—ideas for reaching the Tory government’s target of achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

Dramatically slashing carbon emissions will be the single biggest factor in minimising a drastic temperature rise that threatens climate catastrophe.

David Attenborough told

delegates, “Your very existence here means members of parliament are taking it seriously.”

But the government is not taking climate and ecological chaos seriously. Instead, it is using the climate assembly as a cynical distraction from its lack of action.

Extinction Rebellion (XR) pushed for a “Citizens’ Assembly” to oversee government policy towards a deadline of net zero carbon emissions by 2025.

But the climate assembly, launched by Select Committees of

MPs, falls far short of this demand.

If Britain achieves the 2050 deadline, it still only leaves a 50 percent chance of limiting the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees.

That will result in devastating climate chaos.

If delegates at the climate assembly make any decisions, the government isn’t bound to act on them.

Hope for a habitable world lies in mass action that demands urgent and radical change—not on fakery from the government.

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ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Britain in firing line of US-EU trade war

CHINA AND the United States have agreed to a truce in the trade war they have been waging for the past two years. What is supposed to be “phase one” of a larger trade deal was signed in Washington last week.

The most important antagonisms—over China’s support for its firms and its ambitions to upgrade its economy technologically—are unresolved. And tariffs on the two countries’ exports to each other remain much higher than when the conflict began, averaging around 20 percent.

But another trade war could be building up, this time between the US and the European Union (EU). Donald Trump complained in Davos last week that the EU “have trade barriers where you cannot trade, they have tariffs all over the place.

“They are frankly more difficult to do business with than China.”

He is obsessed especially with German car exports to the US and continually threatens to slap tariffs on them.

Foreign Policy magazine recently ran an article with the headline, “Europe is the New Front in Trump’s Trade War.”

And Trump is right. The EU is a tough nut when it comes to trade. The real success of European integration has been to construct a huge continental single market governed by a system of regulations made in Brussels.

Many non-European firms implement these regulations in order to get access to this market—something that causes resentment in Washington.

The EU’s main priority with Brexit is to keep Britain as what one expert called a “regulatory satellite”.

Its preparations for negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with Boris Johnson aim above all to prevent “competitive undercutting or freeriding” by British firms. It is demanding the right to punish Britain for what it defines as breaches of the deal.

Funnily enough, though, the latest front in the brewing transatlantic trade war puts Britain in the firing line. Trump met European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen in Davos and announced he expected a trade deal with the EU before the US presidential elections in November.

This seems unlikely. Discussions over trade in manufactured goods have stalled in particular because France refuses any negotiations over agriculture. Protecting French farmers from international competition has been a priority in Paris since the 1950s.

Flashpoint

But the most immediate flashpoint is over digital taxes. France and Britain are among a number of states that want to tax US IT giants such as Facebook and Google. The latter make money out of their citizens but operate from fiscal paradises that shield them from taxation.

Steve Mnuchin, the US treasury secretary, responded last week to British plans by saying, “If people just arbitrarily want to put taxes on our digital companies, we will consider putting taxes arbitrarily on car companies.”

He’d already constructed a package of tariffs on £1.8 billion of French goods in retaliation for France’s digital tax.

Ironically it was the French that caved, despite their traditional complaints about US domineering.

French finance minister Bruno Le Maire and Mnuchin quickly agreed to suspend both the tax and the tariffs while seeking an international deal on digital taxation.

It was the British who hung tougher. “We make our own decisions in relation to taxation and we will continue to do so,” Downing St said. This probably reflects the fact that the Tories have decided to prioritise a trade deal with Brussels over the one they are also pursuing with Washington.

The US is Britain’s biggest trading partner, taking a fifth of its exports—but the EU takes 45 percent.

There was another flare up last Sunday. US commerce secretary Wilbur Ross threatened to retaliate if the EU carried out a plan to tax carbon imports.

These conflicts reflect more than Trump’s protectionism. The huge IT companies represent the lead sector of US capitalism, and he’s defending them despite their bosses’ political hostility.

We’re seeing a growing struggle between three trade blocs—the EU, the US, and China, each with their own regulatory regimes. Smaller powers such as Britain are liable to get squeezed.

A MILITARY medical team in Wuhan, central China

British media push fear and panic over new virus in China

AT LEAST ten Chinese cities with a combined population of over 33 million have been put on lockdown in response to the spread of a new strain of the coronavirus.

Even in areas where there are no cases of virus infection harsh restrictions on travel are in place and have been extended beyond the Chinese New Year holidays. The ensuing panic has plunged the British press into a frenzy.

“UK killer virus alert,” was the Daily Mail newspaper’s headline on Thursday.

Its editorial said, “Infected people can journey from one side of the planet to another in a matter of hours.”

Talk of this new strain of the coronavirus becoming a pandemic illness that could kill millions across the world is illustrated with maps showing of how it is spreading.

Spread

Commentators keen to spread fear compare the coronavirus with the Spanish flu that hit 500 million people in 1918 and killed up to 6 percent of the world’s population.

But current levels of infection are nowhere near that.

So far almost 3,000 people are thought to have the virus with 81 deaths—all in China.

That’s still less than the number who died of “regular” flu in the country in January last year.

Fearing turmoil in global

financial markets, the Chinese state is desperate to show the world that it is taking a tough line by imposing draconian restrictions.

Yet many experts fear that the strategy is counter-productive.

Howard Markel, director of the Centre for the History of Medicine at the University of Michigan, said, “I am astounded by what is already the single largest quarantine in recorded history—I am not terribly optimistic it will turn out well. It does prevent



The Daily Mail scaremongers

the movement of goods in and out of those places—food, water, medicines, and healthcare people.”

Markel added that public fear had the potential to drive the virus further.

Scared people tend only to seek medical help when they become desperately sick. This not only means they are at more risk of death, but also means they are more likely to spread the contagion to their families and friends.

Ability

Information about the ability of the new strain of virus to pass from human to human is extremely limited.

It may be that, as with previous pandemic flu scares such as Sars, the coronavirus does not spread easily in public spaces but depends on close contact. Or it may be more dangerous.

The only way to find out is to encourage people with symptoms to come forward in the knowledge that they will be well treated—and that they will be protecting their families and communities.

But those in power, in China and across the world, are more concerned to be seen to take harsh measures than doing what is likely to save the most lives.

‘Action’ just for show

THERE ARE as yet no confirmed cases of the new strain of the virus in Britain.

Some 52 people have been tested but none are positive.

But that has not stopped newspapers here calling for tougher action.

They have drawn attention to the large number of Chinese overseas students studying at British universities and suggested that they are a “threat” to Britain.

Some passengers from China are

already being diverted to a “closed” part of London’s Heathrow airport.

And there are growing demands for beefed-up illness screening at airports, and special quarantine buildings.

But these measures are designed only to create the appearance of action.

The incubation period for such viruses is thought to be around two weeks.

That means few people travelling, even if they are infected, will show any signs of it.

On other pages...

Universal Credit documentary is just a propaganda whitewash>>>Page 13

Scrap HS2 and take the railways off the fat cats

A new report has laid bare the growing chaos behind the Tories' HS2 project, says **Sarah Bates**

IT IS "impossible" to estimate the final cost of the Tories' disastrous HS2 rail network, a National Audit Office (NAO) report concluded last week. There is mounting pressure on the Tories to scrap it.

The project is billions of pounds over budget and years behind schedule. It's a plan to pour billions of pounds of public money into private pockets—while existing train services remain overpriced and unreliable.

The NAO said the Department for Transport's latest estimate of HS2's cost is up to £88 billion—as much as 58 percent over available funding.

Full services on the entire network are "now forecast to start between three and seven years later than originally planned".

The report revealed that the project was officially rated as "unachievable" twice by the Infrastructure and Project Authority.

"HS2 is over budget and behind schedule because the government and HS2 Ltd underestimated the complexity and risk involved," it said. And it added that public money is set to meet a bigger proportion of costs, should the project go ahead.

The NAO said the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd "have not adequately managed risks" to public money.

Budget

Penny Gaines, Stop HS2 campaign group chair, said, "We were still being told in July that the budget was £56 billion by ministers who had been formally told by HS2 that the budget was unobtainable, and their estimates were increasing.

"We call on Boris Johnson to put this project out of its misery and cancel it immediately."

The failure of private firms to provide a decent railway was underlined this week as Tories prepared to renationalise Northern Rail.

Millions of passengers have endured cancellations and delays

BACK STORY

A new report has slammed the Tories' disastrous HS2 project

●The National Audit Office report pointed to the soaring costs and delays to the scheme

●It said the government had failed to manage the risks to public funds posed by HS2

●The report came as the government prepared to renationalise Northern Rail

●Years of chaos on Northern underline the failure of private firms to provide decent railways

since a botched new timetable rollout in May 2018. Previously run by Arriva, the nationalisation of Northern marks the second time in two years that the Tories have been forced to intervene.

The state-owned "operator of last resort" took over the Virgin Trains East Coast line—now known as LNER—in May 2018.

And in an effort to distract from Northern's failings, the government promised to re-open closed rail lines in the north of England.

Transport minister Grant Shapps was due to announce new passenger services for towns that haven't had a railway station since cuts in the 1960s.

It's not the first time the Tories have hinted that they would reverse the Beeching cuts, which were carried out under a Conservative government.

Then-transport secretary Chris Grayling hinted at new train routes at the same time as he announced the collapse of the Virgin East Coast line.

The bloated vanity project of HS2 should be axed and all train services renationalised under democratic control.

EXTINCTION REBELLION activists recently held protests against HS2

Union leaders split over who should head Labour as candidates shift right

TRADE UNION leaders are split over who to back to be the Labour Party's next leader and deputy leader.

The Unite union—Labour's biggest donor—last week backed left wing candidates Rebecca Long-Bailey for leader and Richard Burgon for deputy leader.

Yet two other major affiliated unions—Unison and the GMB—have backed more right wing candidates.

The GMB last week announced it backs Lisa Nandy for leader. She has promised a shift away from the left wing politics of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership with a focus on towns and smaller cities.

Vague

Nandy is still vague about what this means. But she has said she would drop some of Corbyn's more ambitious policies.

Meanwhile the Unison union has backed knight commander of the order of the bath sir Keir Starmer QC.

Starmer championed the policy of backing a second EU referendum—a position that was crucial in Labour's defeat in last year's general election. Despite this



Rebecca Long-Bailey

he is backed by most Labour MPs, who think the party has to move right to regain working class votes.

Union leaders have considerable power inside Labour and have traditionally acted as a block against the more left wing party membership.

They tend to accept that Labour has to govern "responsibly"—not threaten big business too much—and appeal to right wing votes.

Yet in recent years some union leaders—such as Unite's Len McCluskey—have backed the left.

They saw Corbyn's leadership as an opportunity to regain influence.

McCluskey said Unite backed Long-Bailey because "she believes in lots of the radical policies that

have been developed over the last few years".

But he added, "I don't know that she agrees with all his policies."

Votes

Long-Bailey believes that Labour needs to move right to win back votes.

She backs Angela Rayner for deputy leader rather than the left wing Burgon or Dawn Butler.

And at a campaign event in east London last week she promised to end "abuse" of right wing MPs.

Crucially, she also backs policies that severely restrict criticism of Israel and will be used against left wing party members.

Her main pitches to the left are to replace the House of Lords with an elected second chamber, and to allow party members to choose their candidates ahead of elections.

It's a step back from the sense of an outward-looking movement that characterised Corbyn's leadership campaigns in 2015 and 2016.



On other pages...

Brexit—is it all over? >>
Pages 10&11



More online

Rebecca Long-Bailey rally shows limits of left bit.ly/RLBHackney



Setback for Salvini, but the right is a real threat

A regional election brought relief to Italy's government—but it isn't the whole story, says **Simon Basketter**

ITALY'S RIGHT wing League leader Matteo Salvini failed to overturn decades of left of centre rule in the northern region of Emilia-Romagna last Sunday.

The election brought relief to the embattled national government.

Incumbent Democratic Party (PD) governor Stefano Bonaccini won 51.4 percent of the vote.

That compares to 43.7 percent for the candidate backed by the League and its far right allies.

Turnout in the key region was around 67 percent compared with 37 percent in 2014. This is partially due to mobilisations by the anti-populist Sardines movement.

The League triumphed in Emilia-Romagna in European Parliament elections last May.

It became the leading party with nearly 34 percent of the votes, topping the PD's 31 percent.

Just five years earlier it had got 5 percent, compared to the PD's 53 percent. Salvini had campaigned relentlessly and on a racist basis in the region since the start of the year.

Last week in Bologna, in front of TV cameras, he rang the doorbell of an apartment where a Tunisian family had lived for many years.

Salvini asked them if they were drug dealers.

His rightist bloc secured a resounding victory in a separate regional election on Sunday in the southern region of Calabria.

Disaster

While the PD dodged disaster its coalition partner, the 5-Star Movement, won just 3.5 percent of the vote in Emilia-Romagna and just over 7 percent in Calabria.

The party was the largest group in 2018 national elections, winning 33 percent. But recent months have seen its leader Luigi Di Maio resign and its support slide.

Salvini walked out of government with 5-Star last August, expecting to trigger a national election that polls predicted he would win. Instead, 5-Star joined up with the PD and shunted him into opposition.

BACK STORY

The right wing League party has failed to win a regional election

● Matteo Salvini's party lost the election in Emilia-Romagna to the Democratic Party last week

● But the right has won nine regional elections across Italy since March 2018

● Salvini's campaigning on a racist, anti-immigrant message is unfortunately proving popular

● The anti-populist Sardines movement has played a role in mobilising against Salvini

Looking to exact revenge, Salvini has since concentrated all his efforts on winning a stream of local votes.

The right has now won nine regional elections since March 2018, while chalking up just the one loss in Emilia-Romagna.

Unfortunately Salvini's anti-immigrant, anti-European message is popular. And the alternative offered by the mainstream is what opened up the space for the far right in the first place.

The main thing holding the current national coalition together is a fear of snap elections. These would likely hand victory to Salvini, whose party is well ahead in national polls.

The Sardines—a liberal grassroots movement promoting “civility”—has mobilised tens of thousands of people against Salvini.

They have packed squares across the country tightly, like a can of sardines. By putting people on the streets against Salvini they are a positive sign.

And they have just about avoided being simply a promotional movement for the government.

They will meet in March and may launch a political party.



On other pages...

'We can't give in to Macron'
>>Page 20

'THE RESISTANCE does not stop,' says the Sardines anti-populist movement in Italy

Western threats split protests in Iraq

TENS OF thousands of people marched in Iraq's capital Baghdad on Friday of last week to demand the withdrawal of US soldiers from the country.

Iraqi cleric and political leader Moqtada al-Sadr organised Friday's demonstration after the US assassinated top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad earlier this month.

The killing threatened to spark a major war, and the US then moved thousands of soldiers to the region.

Sadr has led resistance movements against the US following the invasion of Iraq in 2003. He has a mass following, particularly among the poor.

Yet he also leads the largest

political block in Iraq's parliament. And last Saturday he abandoned a longer-running, more independent movement against poverty and corruption.

Iraqi security forces attacked that movement's protest camps in Baghdad and other cities last week as Sadr's supporters withdrew.

The movement in Iraq has often focused on Iranian influence in Iraq's politics and oil industry.

But it is also a challenge to the corrupt political system installed by the US.

The crackdown shows how threats by the West can be used to divide and attack movements for real change in the Middle East.

A protester in Iraq

FIGURE IT OUT

79 laws are set to be changed in Indonesia because the government claims they 'hamper business'

20 percent—the level that the government wants to cut corporation tax to, from the current level of 25 percent

16 percent—the rate of youth unemployment in Indonesia last year

PROTESTS over labour laws are hotting up in Indonesia, with trade unionists vowing to fight the new “Omnibus law”.

President Joko Widodo claimed his new bill will create jobs and increase investment.

Workers say the plans will cut severance pay and the hourly minimum

wage, and scrap sanctions against firms that fail to provide health insurance.

Thousands of trade unionists protested against the law outside the House of Representatives in the capital Jakarta on Monday of last week.

Said Iqbal, Indonesian Worker Union Confederation president, said the bill

“gives no protection to the future of workers, prospective workers and young people who will enter the workforce”.

“We will continue to protest,” he said.

The draft law has yet to be made public, and trade unionists have promised strikes and protests against it. Iqbal said a court challenge to the law was also planned.

Lessons of Holocaust

IN THE week leading up to Holocaust Memorial Day, Oxford Stand Up To Racism organised a Never Again—Lessons of the Holocaust educational exhibition.

At the opening rally the Lord Mayor of Oxford spoke poignantly about how his family lost members to the Nazis.

Labour councillor Cassi Perry talked of the far right harassment she has experienced for her Jewish heritage and her campaigning for the rights of refugees and travellers.

Naomi Clayden from the Oxford Jewish Congregation spoke about her experience as a child of German Jewish refugees.

Over 300 people have visited the exhibition so far. We have received positive comments from school groups, teachers, trade unionists, family members of victims and people who were saved by the Kindertransport.

Julie Simmons
Oxford

Remember fighters

ON MONDAY we remembered the horrors of the Holocaust.

Can we also remember the wonderful lives and service given by survivors Leon Greenman, Esther Brunstein and many others? They worked tirelessly to educate us and fight alongside us against the neo-Nazis.

Val Dissington
Edenbridge

This treaty says queen is illegal in Scotland

THE BRITISH parliament has never been sovereign over the affairs of the Scottish people.

That sovereignty has been held by the Scottish people since long before the Treaty of Union.

The Treaty of Union breaches both the Declaration of Arbroath 1320 and the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton 1328. Both stipulate that Scots be not held in subjection to any other monarch. The treaty was signed by a small number

of bribed nobles against the wishes of the majority of the Scottish people.

It could be reasonably argued that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is an illegal administration. Queen Elizabeth is an illegal monarch of an illegally assembled kingdom.

No prime minister or parliamentary dogma should ride roughshod over the wishes of the Scottish people.

William Burns
Edinburgh

Justice for comrade killed in Nigeria

LAST WEEK the police felled comrade Alex Ogbu, journalist, trade unionist, pan-Africanist, author and a member of the Socialist Workers and Youth League (SWL) in Nigeria.

This was when the police opened fire on protesting members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria.

From the account of news site Sahara Reporters, Alex appears to have been killed by a stray bullet.

But this still leaves a number of questions begging for answers, including why live ammunition should be used

days through the snow and mountains, passing small villages and picking up more marchers on the way.

As we passed through the villages we were met with support and solidarity. People waved from their balconies.

In some places we were greeted with mountain horns, and in one we were given hot grog.

The march was made up of young activists from German-speaking Switzerland.

But it included people of all ages and a small number of activists from other countries. The most popular slogans were, "System change not climate change," and, "Another world is stoppable"

another world is possible together we're unstoppable". In German, "Break the power of the banks and corporations."

When we reached the outskirts of Davos, the group had swelled to over a thousand.

About 300 activists broke off to blockade the main road into Davos. But the main body of the march planned to march to the centre of Davos and meet up with another march organised by the Swiss Socialist Party youth.

The march was a demonstration of the strength, energy and resilience of the climate justice movement.

John Sinha
North London



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

We marched to shut down the billionaire hypocrites

Just a thought...

Rebecca Long-Failey?

I SAW online your description of Rebecca Long-Bailey's campaign event in east London last week (Rebecca Long-Bailey rally shows left has limited its sights, Socialist Worker online).

Long-Bailey is no Jeremy Corbyn unfortunately.

Stephen Calder
On Facebook

● SHE'S ALL that's left by the looks of things. We have our normal Constituency Labour Party meeting next week, followed by another to nominate a candidate. I'll probably end up opening my gob and getting thrown out.

Dafydd Loyd
On Facebook

● I THINK the Labour Party is in crisis. That's the only rationale for Corbyn to have been elected as leader in the first place.

The risk is not making a good decision at this stage about who succeeds him.

Actually it's hard to imagine any of the prime contenders being able to lead a strong Labour opposition.

Stephen JL
On Facebook

When we won at St Mungo's

FLASHBACK TO 2014 when St Mungo's workers went on strike and won!

The successful strike shows what can be accomplished when we stick together to defend our terms and conditions.

We've won before, and we'll win again.

Unite London and Eastern
On Twitter

Greta knows better

LAST WEEK, Donald Trump's treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin ridiculed climate activist Greta Thunberg.

Asked if Thunberg's call for divestment from fossil fuel companies would threaten economic growth Mnuchin retorted, "After she goes and studies economics in college she can come back and explain that to us."

That's grubby even by the very low standards of the Trump administration.

Sasha Simic
East London



Alex Ogbu

to disperse demonstrations. Alex joined what was then the Socialist Workers Movement in 2011 in Abuja. Some of our comrades in Lagos who had worked politically with him as a journalist had

recommended him to us.

Alex's foray into journalism was not limited to mainstream papers such as National Encomium and the African Herald Express.

He served three times as a member of the SWL editorial board.

SWL members, particularly in the Abuja branch, will sorely miss him.

Our heart goes out to his wife Francesca and their two year old daughter.

We do assure them of this—we will fight for justice for Alex.

Andy Wynne
By email

As Britain leaves the European Union, **Sophie Squire** and **Sarah Bates** look at the problems that lie ahead for the Tories, big business and Labour

IS BREXIT DONE?

BRITAIN WILL formally leave the European Union (EU) this week. It will be a landmark moment in a process that has caused years of chaos for the political establishment. Under Boris Johnson's deal a temporary "transition period" will run to the end of the year. It will keep EU rules that ban state aid, wholesale renationalisation and public ownership.

During this period Britain stays in the EU's single market and customs union, but gives up decision-making powers and seats on institutional bodies.

Although Johnson promised to "get Brexit done," there is still the tricky matter of the future Free Trade Agreement to negotiate.

He said this would "likely" be finished by the end of the year. Completion of the Free Trade Agreement in 2020 is part of Johnson's withdrawal agreement.

But negotiations don't start until February. And after its election victory, a bullish Tory party may be less willing to make concessions to the EU.

Chancellor Sajid Javid told the Financial Times newspaper, "We will not be in the single market and we will not be in the customs union by the end of the year."

The Tories, and Johnson in particular, have spent years promising that Brexit is just around the corner. The reality has proved more difficult.

Last year Johnson infamously said he would rather be "dead in a ditch" than to have not left the EU by the end of October.

The EU could continue to run down the clock on negotiations while pressure on the Tories deepens.

In the autumn the prospect of a "no deal" Brexit could resurface—which would alarm big business.

A huge question mark also still hangs over trade with Northern Ireland.

Johnson has insisted there will be no physical checks on the movement of goods between Britain and Northern Ireland—but the EU is unlikely to accept this.

WHAT IS THE EU POSITION?

EU LEADERS expressed regret and shock at the Leave vote in June 2016—but said the union "is the framework for our common political future".

The EU didn't want Britain to leave—but urged it to begin the process "as soon as possible" after the referendum.

Brexit threatens EU dominance as a capitalist bloc



BACKING REMAIN—David Cameron (top) Theresa May (centre) Virgin boss Richard Branson (above)



Boris Johnson



IS IT ALL OVER?

in competition with the US and China. In the longer term it could encourage other member states to leave.

The process has created uncertainty for bosses and governments across Europe. After four years of delays and missed deadlines, the EU will be keen to finish it off.

And unless a mutually-beneficial trade deal is agreed, Brexit could pit the bosses of the EU and Britain even more sharply against each other.

Last week German chancellor Angela Merkel described Johnson's election victory as a "competitor at our door".

Johnson wants to make it as easy as

possible for British businesses to trade with economies outside the EU.

Ultimately, he hopes Britain can do a deal with the US and find a way to compete with China. And he hopes to strike a trade deal with Japan before the end of the year.

The EU's Department for Exiting Europe said Britain could become a "Singapore-on-Thames".

It warned in a leaked document that Britain could adopt a model of deregulation, lower taxes and rates of public spending.

The EU wants to keep Britain politically and economically close, and avoid the high tariffs and uncertainty for bosses of a dramatic break.

But Johnson is keen to push deregulation, which would allow bosses to escape some EU restrictions on business.

WHAT IS LABOUR SAYING NOW?

LABOUR BACKED Remain, with a small minority of its MPs campaigning to Leave. Since then it has fluctuated over whether to back a second referendum—and whether to campaign for Remain.

High-profile MPs—including shadow Brexit secretary Keir Starmer—pushed for a second referendum. But none of the leadership candidates have put a clear position on whether they back Brexit.

At Labour's conference last September, delegates voted to back Corbyn and reject a motion to support Remaining in the EU in all circumstances.

But the party did back a vote on any Brexit deal. This was a major change from its 2017 position of

respecting the referendum result and seeking a Brexit that could benefit working class people.

During the general election campaign, Labour said it wanted to negotiate a Brexit deal first then "let the people have the final say".

This would amount to a deeply divisive second referendum.

Voters deserted Labour in the general election. It lost 60 seats—all but eight in areas that had backed Leave.

Some who wanted to "get Brexit done" switched their votes to parties they felt would respect the referendum result. A poll by Lord Ashcroft showed that more than a quarter of Leave voters who voted



Some reactionaries back the EU while others oppose it—Sajid Javid (top) Nigel Farage (centre) Angela Merkel (centre) and Jean-Claude Juncker (above)



Keir Starmer

for Labour in 2017 switched to the Tories or the Brexit Party.

Others stayed at home. Labour's problem wasn't that it backed a second referendum too late. It was that it lined up with sections of Tories and Lib Dems to ignore the wishes of millions of ordinary people.

WHAT DOES BIG BUSINESS THINK ABOUT BREXIT?

THE LEAVE vote was a blow for big business and the ruling elite. They have tried to reverse it. Business owners enthusiastically backed the call for a People's Vote after the referendum because the EU is pro-business.

An EU founding treaty "prohibited" restrictions on bosses' right to make profits.

It also blocks measures that could threaten the profits of the privateers, such as wholesale renationalisation of industries.

Remaining in the EU's single market makes it easier for the movement of goods, capital and people within EU borders.

Bosses overwhelmingly backed Remain because the EU is good for their profits. But some, driven by a mixture of nationalism and vulnerability to international competition, support Brexit.

A Tory Brexit will benefit some sections of capital. But overwhelmingly big business has not been happy with Johnson's Brexit plans.

The Tories have been the party of the ruling elite for over a century.

The continuing rift between the party and sections of big business will only cause more trouble for the Tories in the future.

WAS THE LEAVE VOTE REACTIONARY?

SOME LEFT wing Remainers say the Leave vote marked a swing to the right.

But for many voters, the referendum was an opportunity to be seen and heard—and to defy the Remain option that most of the establishment supported.

Remain had the support of the leaders of all the major political parties and almost all bosses' organisations and international finance bodies. So why did

52 percent of people defy the increasingly drastic pleas from these groups to stay inside the EU?

Some Leave voters accepted racist myths and scapegoated migrants for the problems in society.

The official Leave EU campaign promised that Brexit would mean tighter border controls.

But it's not true that every racist voted Leave. David Cameron, an ardent Remainer, imposed many racist laws. Theresa May, one of the architects of the "hostile environment," voted Remain.

The official Remain campaign, Stronger Together in Europe, warned that Brexit could mean "double the levels of immigrations" and "potentially making illegal immigration more difficult to control".

Many people voted Leave because they saw the EU as undemocratic and as an expression of big business. They were right to do so.

Writing off over 17 million Leave voters off as racist ignores the strong class element of the vote. Poorer people were more likely to vote to Leave. Many were driven by anger at years of austerity, inequality and poverty.

Sir Richard Lambert, former Financial Times newspaper editor, said at the time that the vote "represents in part the frustration of those who have not benefited from economic growth in recent decades."

And Jeremy Corbyn said the result showed that people feel "shut out of a political and economic system that has let them down".

The Leave vote was strong in areas that have been badly hit by poverty, declining wages, collapsing public services and austerity.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

PART OF the Brexit process will involve replacing EU rules and writing new Britain-specific legislation.

Brexit on Tory terms undoubtedly presents an opportunity for a vicious Johnson-led government to unleash a raft of attacks. And bosses will blame Brexit for cuts to jobs and conditions.

They can be pushed back. There are important issues for socialists to fight over, such as the rights of EU nationals and the new immigration bill.

Leaving the EU doesn't automatically mean these rights will get worse.

Equality legislation, equal pay and employment rights were begrudgingly rolled out because of mass struggle and public pressure, not because of the benevolence of Brussels.

And critically, Brexit presents opportunities for the left, not just the right. It's an opportunity to fight for a huge programme of renationalisation and state aid that EU rules were designed to stop.

Brexit has unleashed four years of crisis on British politicians, bosses and bankers.

Their divisions give us more chance of stopping Tory assaults—and of challenging the neoliberalism and austerity that dominates British politics.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } PUBLIC MEETINGS

DERBY

Booklaunch—System Change not Climate Change

Thu 13 Feb, 7pm,
West End Community Centre,
Mackworth Rd
(next to Britannia Mill),
DE22 3BL

LUTON & ST ALBANS

Booklaunch—System Change not Climate Change

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
Stockwood Hotel,
41-43 Stockwood Crescent
(enter via London Rd car park),
LU1 3SS

PORTSMOUTH

Revolt in France—how workers can fight back

Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Somerstown
Community Centre,
River's St,
PO5 4EZ

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } BRANCH MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

ABERDEEN

The revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx

Mon 3 Feb, 6pm,
The Snug,
Ma Cameron's,
6-8 Little Belmont St,
AB10 1JG

BARNSELY

Australia to Jakarta—what's behind the climate crisis?

Thu 6 Feb, 6.30pm,
Room 302,
The Civic, Hanson St,
S70 2HZ

BOLTON

Revolt in France—how workers can fight back

Wed 5 Feb, 7pm
Bolton Socialist Club,
16 Wood St,
BL1 1DY

BRIGHTON & HOVE

Can there be a progressive patriotism?

Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Ship St,
BN1 1AF

BRISTOL

Rosa Luxemburg—a revolutionary for today

Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm
YHA, 14 Narrow Quay,
BS1 4QA

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Can non-violent direct action bring about change?

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Red Triangle Cafe,
160 St James's St,
BB11 1NR

SOCIALIST WORKER BOOKLAUNCHES WITH AUTHOR LAURA MILES

BIRMINGHAM & BLACK COUNTRY

Wed 5 Feb, 7pm,
West Bromwich Town Hall,
High Street,
B70 8DT

GREATER MANCHESTER

Wed 26 Feb, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
6 Mount St,
M2 5NS

LIVERPOOL

Wed 19 Feb, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
22 School Ln,
L1 3BT

SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm,
Central United
Reform Church,
60 Norfolk St,
S1 2JB

SWANSEA

Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Elysium Gallery & Bar,
210 High St,
SA1 1PE

CARDIFF

Can there be a progressive patriotism?

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Cathays Community Centre,
Cathays Terrace,
CF24 4HX

CHESTERFIELD

State and revolution—is the state neutral?

Thu 30 Jan, 7pm,
Chesterfield Library,
New Beetwell St,
S40 1QN

COVENTRY

Australia to Jakarta—what's behind the climate crisis?

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
The Golden Cross,
8 Hay Ln,
CV1 5RF

DERBY

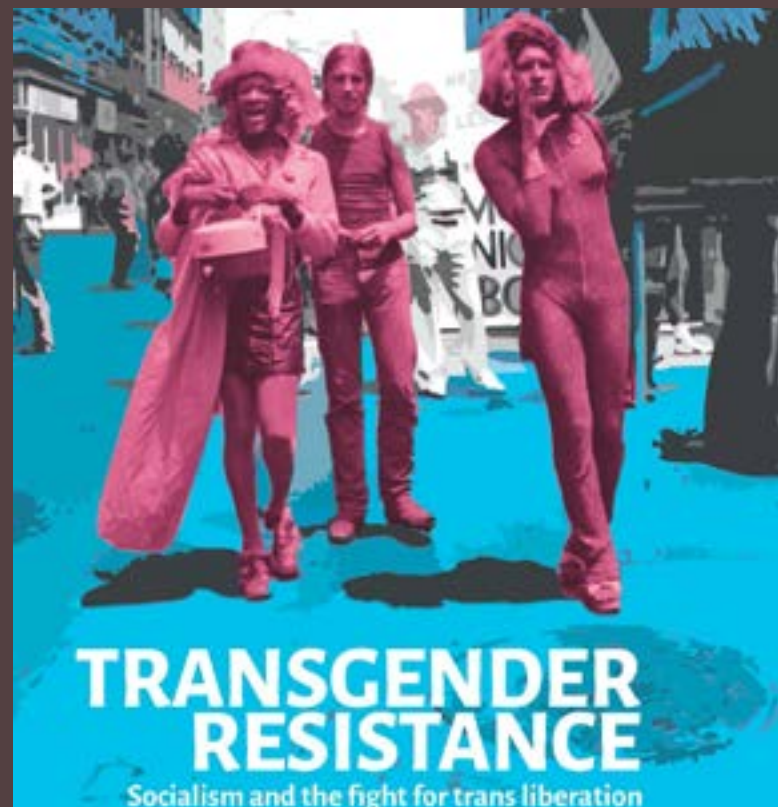
Are we entering a new age of global revolt?

Thu 6 Feb, 7pm,
West End Community
Centre,
Mackworth Rd (next
to Britannia Mill),
DE22 3BL

EDINBURGH

Too many people? Climate change and the myth of overpopulation

Wed 5 Feb Jan, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
7 Victoria St,
EH1 2JL



EXETER

Iran, imperialism and the threat of war

Wed 5 Feb, 7pm,
The Exeter Peace Shop,
31 New Bridge St,
EX4 3AH

GLASGOW

Too many people? Climate change and the myth of overpopulation

Thu 6 Feb, 7pm,
Avant Garde,
33-44 King St,
Merchant City, G1 5QT

HUDDERSFIELD

Revolt in France—how workers can fight back

Wed 5 Feb, 6.30pm,
Brian Jackson House,
2 New North Parade (near
both train and bus stations),
HD1 5JP

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

Australia to Jakarta—what's behind the climate crisis?

Wed 6 Feb, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Meeting House Lane,
LA1 1TX

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

Can there be a progressive patriotism?

Thu 6 Feb, 7pm,
The Swarthmore
Education Centre,
2-7 Woodhouse Square,
LS3 1AD

LIVERPOOL

Australia to Jakarta—what's behind the climate crisis?

Wed 5 Feb, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
22 School Ln,
L1 3BT

LONDON: HARINGEY

What would a socialist society look like?

Wed 12 Feb, 7pm,
St John Vianney Church
Hall,
386 West Green Rd,
N15 3QH

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Can there be a socialist in the White House?

Thu 13 Feb, 7pm,
Elizabeth House,
2 Hurlock St,
Highbury,
N5 1ED

LONDON: KINGSTON

Why is the media so biased?

Thu 6 Jan, 6pm,
Room JG 3003,
Penrhyn Road Campus,
Kingston University,
KT1 2EE

LONDON: NEWHAM

Workers power, strikes and challenging India's hard right government

Wed 12 Feb, 7pm,
Stratford Advice Arcade,
107-109 The Grove,
E15 1HP

LONDON: SOUTH

Capitalism versus the climate

Wed 5 Feb, 7pm,
Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Shaltoun Rd,
Brixton,
SW2 1EP

LONDON: SOUTH EAST

Australia to Jakarta—what's behind the climate crisis?

Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Deptford Lounge,
9 Giffin St,
SE8 4RH

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Revolt in France—how workers can fight back

Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Weavers Community Centre,
10 Shacklewell St,
E2 7EG

LONDON: WEST & NORTH WEST

Defending Palestine—why opposing Israel is not a crime

Thu 13 Feb, 7.30pm,
Woodlane Community Centre,
78 White City Cl,
Shepherd's Bush,
W12 7DZ

MANCHESTER: CENTRAL

Does unconscious bias explain racism?

Wed 5 Feb, 7pm,
Central Methodist Hall,
Oldham St,
M1 1JQ

NEWCASTLE

Know your enemy—Alt right, far right & fascists

Wed 5 Feb, 7pm,
Floor 2, Commercial
Union House,
39 Pilgrim St,
NE1 6QE

PLYMOUTH

Fake news and bias—who controls the media?

Thu 6 Feb, 7pm,
Quaker House,
74 Mutley Plain,
PL4 6LF

POOLE AND DORCHESTER

A Marxist history of the Labour Party

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
Colliton Club,
Colliton House,
DT1 1XJ

PORTSMOUTH

Can we win justice through the courts?

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Somerstown
Community Centre,
River's St,
PO5 4EZ

SCARBOROUGH

Are we entering a new age of global revolt?

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Tap and Spile,
94 Falsgrave Rd,
YO12 5AZ

SHEFFIELD: CITY CENTRE

Chile in revolt—neoliberalism & resistance

Thu 6 Feb, 7pm,
Central United
Reformed Church,
60 Norfolk St (near
Crucible Theatre),
S1 2JB

SWANSEA

Can there be a progressive patriotism?

Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm,
Brynmill Community Centre,
St Albans Rd,
SA2 0BP

WIGAN

Revolt in France—how workers can fight back

Thu 6 Feb, 7pm
Thu 30 Jan, 7pm,
The Anvil,
Dorning St, WN1 1HE

YORK

Can there be a progressive patriotism?

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Sea Horse Hotel,
4 Fawcett St,
YO10 4AH

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AFTER THE ELECTION...

WHERE NOW FOR THE LEFT?

- Ian Byrne, Labour MP for Liverpool West Derby
- Mark Serwotka, PCS Union General Secretary
- Emina Ibrahim, Momentum Vice-Chair
- Charlie Kimber, Socialist Worker editor
- School climate striker

Wednesday, 5 Feb, 7pm,
Soas Paul Webley
Wing, London
WC1E 7HX

Universal Credit doc is just a propaganda whitewash

A new BBC documentary is supposed to give an honest view of the benefits system. But, say **Amber van Boost** and **Ellen Clifford**, it hides the real truth

THIS THREE part documentary follows the story of the hated **Universal Credit (UC)** benefit—its creators, Jobcentre staff, and claimants.

It promises “unprecedented access to the Department for Work and Pensions” (DWP). What it doesn’t mention is its own role within an expensive propaganda campaign to improve the toxic image of UC.

The propaganda campaign came to light when an internal DWP memo was leaked to Sheffield Disabled People Against Cuts last year.

The memo describes the BBC documentary as “a fantastic opportunity for us”.

The first episode follows staff and claimants at Peckham job centre—notorious among campaigners for reportedly issuing the highest rate of sanctions in Britain in 2015.

The individual stories featured focus heavily on the idea of UC as a system designed for the unemployed. It’s a vast oversimplification.

There is no investigation of the DWP’s claim that UC is about making the benefits system less complicated. It isn’t. UC rolls six benefits into one and actually makes it harder for claimants and advisors alike.

The documentary completely overlooks issues where people may be unable to work.

Shocking

This is shocking considering that 58 percent of households due to be affected by the rollout of UC contain at least one disabled member.

The programme’s narrative fits the DWP’s agenda of focussing on the supposed success of moving people into employment.

It ignores more insidious issues of disabled people being incorrectly found fit for work, or the soaring child poverty levels caused by the Tory attacks.

Problems that do feature are claimants attempting to budget on limited income, and the repayment plans on advance loans. These are given out while waiting five weeks for the first payment.

The main solution that is shown is for claimants to get off benefits and into work.

There is no mention of what happens to those who cannot work so are stuck permanently on inadequate income, or those left worse off under UC.

Neil Couling, UC boss, is allowed to get away, completely unchallenged, with statements that defy the considerable evidence base of the impacts of UC. He claims that problems such as paying claimants on



INSIDE PECKHAM jobcentre

time have been features of the benefits system for 35 years and that UC is an improvement.

All evidence points to the contrary. Issues such as rent arrears and failures to pay claimants correctly and on time have massively escalated under UC.

Despite all this, the documentary can’t help but expose the unbelievable incompetence and detachment from reality with which it has been planned and managed.

Design

We see the sixth floor of Caxton House where 300 civil servants work on the project.

On the “mother wall” paper “tickets” are mapped out to help design the UC process.

They make suggestions such as paying claimants on time and making UC easy for claimants to understand. This is where the most ambitious overhaul of the benefits system since its inception was after nine years and an estimated £15.8 billion cost.

Civil servants sitting in a posh office puzzling over how to do the basics in supplying a necessary lifeline while poverty, destitution and homelessness escalate.

Universal Credit: Inside the Welfare State. BBC2, Monday 4 February at 9pm

UC behind ‘rent arrears and debt’ says report

A REPORT into Universal Credit (UC) published last week highlighted how the benefit has pushed some people into desperate situations. “Sometimes you are starving, there’s no food,” said one single parent claimant.

Another said, “All they would help me out with was £475 of a £750 rent, so I became homeless.”

And another described the system as “lacking in dignity and disempowering”.

The Resolution Foundation report focused on the impact of UC on Liverpool City Region (LCR).

It said the “more stringent” UC system had created “rent arrears

and legacy benefit debts”. Its monthly payment schedule was “almost universally disliked”.

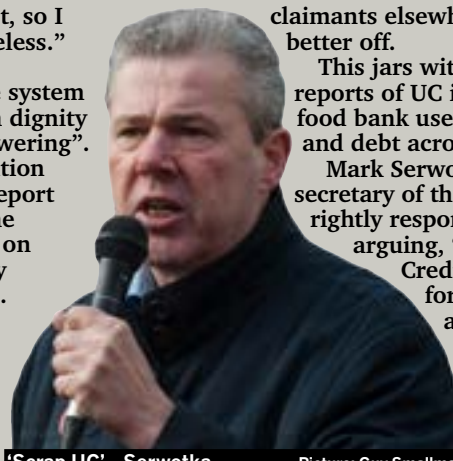
But the report also claimed that UC would “achieve its objective” of encouraging people into work.

It said UC on average cuts incomes in LCR by around £7 a week. But it also said UC makes claimants elsewhere £1 a week better off.

This jars with repeated reports of UC increasing food bank use, rent arrears and debt across Britain.

Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the PCS union, rightly responded by arguing, “Universal Credit is a disaster for claimants and needs to be scrapped.”

Sadie Robinson



‘Scrap UC’—Serwotka

Picture: Guy Smallman

TELEVISION

THE WINDERMERE CHILDREN

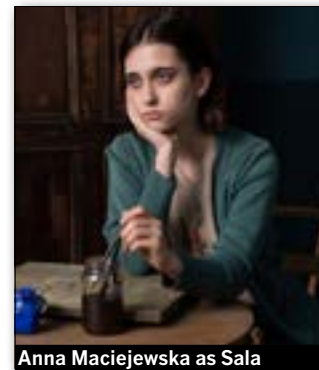
Available now on bbc.co.uk/iplayer

AUGUST, 1945. A coachload of children arrive at the Calgarth Estate by Lake Windermere, England.

They are child survivors of the Nazi Holocaust that has devastated Europe’s Jewish population.

Carrying only the clothes they wear and a few possessions, they bear the emotional and physical scars of all they have suffered.

By the lake, the children learn English, play football, ride bikes, express their



Anna Maciejewska as Sala

trauma through painting—and begin to heal.

Some locals taunt them, but they are embraced by others.

Haunted by nightmares, they yearn for news of their loved ones. But in the absence of relatives, the children find family in each other.

The Windermere Children is a stark, moving and ultimately redemptive story of the bonds the children make with one another, and of how the friendships forged at Windermere sustain them as they rebuild their lives.

What’s on at BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop

Transgender Resistance

With author Laura Miles
Friday 28 Feb, 6:30pm
Admission £2, pay on the door



1 Bloomsbury Street,
London WC1B 3QE
020 7637 1848
bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

AMID A growing assault on trans people, Laura Miles' new book *Transgender Resistance* calls for people to take a stand against oppression.

It aims to “fill in the gap in socialist literature on trans oppression”.

It argues that “the fight for liberation from oppression and the task of transforming the capitalist system are in reality the same fight”.

The book comes against the backdrop of growing visibility of trans people in films, music and wider society.

But Laura argues that the “flip side of greater trans visibility has been the development of a disturbing backlash”. “From around the middle of 2016,” she writes, “a significant assault has been mounted on trans people's rights and aspirations.”

The number of murders and killings of trans people worldwide has risen in the last three years from 295 in 2016 to 369 in 2018.

Surveys in the US and elsewhere have shown that between 25 and 43 percent of trans people have attempted suicide at some point in their lives.

And social attitudes are more hostile than towards LGBT+ people in general.

In Britain the debate over trans oppression has been focused around the Gender Recognition Act (GRA). Laura says that “hostile commentators have been lining up to oppose fairly limited proposals to amend” the law that would make it easier for trans people to self-identify.

Chapters in *Transgender Resistance* go through the debates around the GRA in detail.

But the book's broader aim is to locate trans oppression in class society and capitalism.

Angst

Laura writes that trans people “stimulate a fundamental angst” over “the common sense about gender and sex”.

But people's ideas about gender are not “immaculately conceived from thin air”. They flow from material conditions—how production is organised, and the social relations between the rulers and ruled in a class society such as capitalism.

This is at the heart of debates around how socialists should respond to the fight for trans rights.

Laura argues against what she calls an “essentialist ideas about gender and sexuality”.

“They don't reflect truths at all but rather ideological claims that serve the interests of the dominant class,” she writes.

An essentialist view thinks that sex is biologically determined in a binary way and that gender follows suit. This comes



A trans pride march in London

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

THE FIGHT FOR TRANS RIGHTS

A new book by Laura Miles looks at the origins of trans people's oppression, and what socialists should say. **Tomáš Tengely-Evans** read it—and says you should too



Laura Miles

out in a transphobic argument that biological sex means trans women aren't really women.

Laura writes that people sometimes look to science to “hunt down ‘fundamental’ genetic or brain structure differences between males and females.”

“Those attracted to this myth of an apparently neat, essentialist binary gulf might be disappointed to discover that life really isn't that simple.”

That's “even at a biological



Evidence that gender is hardwired into the brain is weak

level, let alone when it comes to sexuality, gender and gender identity”.

A small minority of people are born with intersex conditions. But the medical profession largely has not accepted these variations and tends to advocate surgical or hormonal treatment on young infants.

Many intersex organisations regard that as oppressive. And intersex people are considered to suffer similarly to the way others who face oppression on

the basis of sexuality or gender identity. That's one reason why “I” for intersex is often added to variations of the LGBT+ acronym.

But Laura warns people not to fall into the trap of seeing intersex and transgender as the same thing, citing the example of South African athlete Caster Semenya.

Semenya was subject to a professional association ruling that said she had to take hormone blockers to reduce her testosterone levels to continue competing.

“She does not claim to be transgender and almost certainly has an intersex condition that means her body naturally generates testosterone at relatively high levels,” writes Laura. “Transgender relates to a person's gender identity and is not the same as having an intersex condition.”

“Intersex relates to a physical condition whereas being transgender relates to a lack of a ‘fit’ between a person's birth-assigned gender and their sense of gender identity.”

SO WHAT is gender identity? Laura argues, “Gender identity is much more than a ‘feeling’ as it is sometimes described rather dismissively in trans-critical and transphobic narratives.”

“It is the outcome of interactions of a person's self-perceived body.

“It's their biological sex, the social perception of their body in the eyes of others, social factors like gender values and expectations, and finally a person's development as a sexual being with sexual attractions and sexual needs.”

Laura argues that evidence that gender is hardwired into the brain is weak.

She writes that the way children are nurtured and raised “is flexible and depends on the social order into which they are born.”

This is backed up in the book by substantial sections of history showing how ideas around gender have changed.

Oppression

Evidence from archaeology and anthropology shows that women's oppression did not exist in pre-class hunter gatherer or foraging societies. “In such societies,” says Laura “male and female roles might differ due to differentiated biological abilities.”

“But this would not necessarily mean significant differences in social status or power between the genders.”

Laura adds that evidence shows a greater variety and fluidity to gender roles. “Being a particular sex could lead to a variety of gender roles and choices of gender as ascribed by particular societies,” she writes.

This changed with the rise of class society. Laura explains, “Men increasingly came to

control the forces of production as agriculture was developed and more children were needed to work the land.

“Women's reproductive and infant nurturing roles largely precluded the possibility of continuous heavy labour in the fields,” she writes.

Men were able to accumulate greater wealth as they controlled and traded the surpluses made possible by agricultural society and women were increasingly restricted to privatised family units.

With the subjugation of women came far more rigid gender roles.

The institution of the family began to regulate sexuality.

Pushed

Capitalism, based on mass production outside the family unit, pushed women and children into the factories and threatened to break apart the working class family.

Yet capitalists still needed the family to reproduce the next generation of workers.

So in the late 19th century rules were brought in to enforce the idea of a “nuclear family”.

During this period abortion was banned and the term “homosexuality” was first used. Same sex relations were seen to threaten the family and the idea of sex for procreation not pleasure.

THE FAMILY has undergone many changes under capitalism. But it remains resilient.

Some socialists and feminists argue that a Marxist explanation about the rise of class society and origins of oppression means we shouldn't say trans women are women.

The argument essentially reduces this analysis to the biological differences between male and female bodies.

Laura argues against an approach to the argument that sees it as a choice between a biologically determined view of gender and one that sees it as just a social construct.

She takes on one argument from radical feminists that says trans women have been socialised differently and have not experienced sexism.

She explains that it's useful to look at how people interact when meeting for the first time. They don't inspect people's sex. People will often “read a person



Athlete Caster Semenya (above) has faced oppressive treatment. **The nuclear family** (above) regulates ideas about sexuality

they meet as the gender they are presenting”.

“The social perception of a person as a man or a woman is the key determinant in interactions shaped by expectations of driven by patterns of oppression in a society,” she writes.

“Gender is not merely the social face of biological sex and is conceptually distinct from a person's sex.

“The term ‘woman’ should be therefore be inclusive and cover trans women and vice versa for the term ‘man’ and trans man.” One of the things that distinguishes a Marxist approach to oppression is the idea that it has not always existed.

Laura says we can have a society without oppression—but that means overturning the whole system and fighting for human liberation.

READ MORE

● **Transgender Resistance: Socialism And The Fight For Trans Liberation** by Laura Miles £10

● **Pride, Politics and Protest** by Laura Miles £3

● **Marxism and Women's Liberation** by Judith Orr £9.99

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



FOCUS ON SCOTLAND

Radical action needed for Scottish independence fight

Charlie McKinnon argues that activists should push for a new phase of a resistance to force the break up of the British state



STURGEON IS relying on political and legal wrangling

THE BATTLE for Scottish independence is at a critical juncture.

Faced with the intransigence of Boris Johnson and a Scottish National Party (SNP) focused on parliamentary and legal manoeuvring, activists are debating the way forward.

Pro-independence group All Under One Banner (AUOB) has held mass demonstrations across Scotland since 2016.

These huge shows of force will need to form one part of the fight for independence.

But those wanting a break from the British state need to organise a bigger and bolder spirit of resistance.

There is a danger that “march fatigue” may set in if the protests become too ritualised and passive.

Activists should argue for direct action and civil disobedience—Extinction Rebellion (XR) has shown that such action can be popular.

Some of the more mainstream and pro-capitalist independence supporters might shrink from such measures.

The fight for Scottish independence has to have working class politics at the front and centre of the movement—pushing for strikes, occupations and protests.

The SNP attempts to request permission from Johnson to hold a new independence referendum have predictably failed.

Pursuit

First minister Nicola Sturgeon has already ruled out an unofficial referendum and said she will not sanction any illegal activities in pursuit of independence.

Effectively this means that her only remaining option is a legal challenge to Johnson's decision—

although the prospects for success are remote.

This strategy is likely to be a disaster. The legal system could take years to rule on such a case.

And wrangling in the courts could suck all the energy out of the insurgent independence movement.

Some leading SNP figures are already finding ways to retreat.

Former MP Angus Robertson and former media director Kevin Pringle have called for people to give up hoping for indyref2 this year.

They argue for the movement to concentrate on the Scottish parliamentary elections in 2021.

And cracks are appearing in Scottish Labour—which holds a pro-unionist position.

Prominent politicians such as MSP Monica Lennon, former MP Paul Sweeney and STUC union federation leader Grahame Smith argue that Scottish Labour should now support the demand for a referendum.

A new pro-independence group, Scottish Labour for Radical Democracy, is backing

a strategy of non-cooperation and civil disobedience against the government.

Despite the machinations at the top, the critical mechanism for winning change is through mass and militant action.

Independence activists need to escalate action—not to retreat and rely on the SNP.

Conflict

This organised resistance will bring the movement into conflict with the SNP and the elements of big business that support independence.

Socialists have a role to play in shaping the tactics of this movement.

An AUOB national assembly on 15 February will bring together activists to discuss the way forward.

The SNP are happy to lend implied support to the AUOB marches.

But the tension that underlines this is likely to come to fore if the movement takes on a more urgent and radical edge.

This could include people organising around Scottish independence in their workplace.

Activists should move beyond arguing for more “monster marches”—although they are important—into building a movement that can take on the might of the political establishment.

Militancy and political determination from increasing numbers of ordinary people will be the key to smashing open the independence impasse.



Working class politics should be at the front and centre of the movement

Hunger for change feeds Sanders campaign

by GABBY THORPE

BERNIE SANDERS' campaign to be the Democratic Party's candidate for US president is winning real enthusiasm as the process to choose the nominee begins.

Iowa will be the first state to vote next Monday, followed by New Hampshire on 11 February.

Sanders describes himself as a democratic socialist. His campaign centres on issues like medical care for everyone, a \$15 an hour minimum wage, action against the climate destroying corporations and removing big money from politics.

He publicly denounced Donald Trump's drive to war in Iran.

The support for his campaign reflects a hunger for change.

A staggering one million people volunteered for his campaign in the first 24 hours after his candidacy was announced.

Sanders has shown his support for working class movements—including the

US UPDATE

The next US presidential election is scheduled for 3 November this year

● It will decide who will take on Donald Trump for the Democratic Party

● Each of the main parties, the Republicans and the Democrats, choose their candidate through a long process of primaries and caucuses

● This process begins in Iowa on 3 February and goes on until June

● Primaries and caucuses are where the voters in a particular state say who they want to be the candidate

● Fourteen states vote on 3 March—"super Tuesday"—a critical moment for the campaign

teachers' strikes in Chicago last year.

But he has been savaged by the Democratic establishment.

Sanders was recently accused of sexism after a CNN report claimed that he told



BERNIE SANDERS has seen a rush of support, despite attacks from top Democrats

fellow candidate Elizabeth Warren in 2018 that a woman couldn't beat Donald Trump. The report cited four anonymous sources.

Sanders instantly denied the claims, pointing out that Hillary Clinton won the

popular vote against Trump in 2016.

It's not the first time that he has faced smears.

At the end of 2019, right wing journalist Tiana Lowe published an article calling Sanders' campaign

"the most antisemitic" campaign in decades.

This is despite the fact that Sanders is Jewish, born to parents who fled Poland in the Second World War.

Clinton has also attacked Sanders. In footage from a

forthcoming documentary, Clinton said that "nobody likes him" and that there is a culture of "misogyny and racism surrounding his campaign".

Other leading candidates are Warren and former vice president Joe Biden.

Warren was a Republican until 1995 and has already retreated from a commitment to free medical care for all. She told one interviewer she is "capitalist to the bone".

Biden has spent decades working with the most brutal US corporations and is a thoroughly establishment figure.

The Democrat machine's assault on Sanders underlines the pro-capitalist nature of the party.

Reflecting this widespread perception, Congress representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said recently "we don't have a left party" in the US.

She added, "The Democratic Party is a centre or a centre-conservative party."

The danger is that activists and socialists become sucked into the fruitless effort to change such a party.

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Wildcat walkout takes on bosses at Soas university

Soas management have launched a vicious attack on some of the lowest-paid academic staff—but it has been met by resistance, reports **Sadie Robinson**

AN inspiring struggle at a central London university is taking on bosses' attacks on jobs and conditions—and challenging their neoliberal vision of education.

Management at Soas University of London launched an attack on workers earlier this month.

By cancelling research leave for permanent staff, they are pushing them to take on more of the teaching in the university.

This leaves less teaching work for fractionals—staff employed on a fraction of a full time contract and on worse conditions.

The attack sparked an unofficial walkout by some UCU and Unison union members at Soas on Thursday of last week.

A noisy and upbeat student and staff rally showed the mood to take the bosses on.

Misinformation

Student Yasmeen said, "There's a lot of misinformation going around. People are saying, they're not going to fire the fractionals."

"Well you're going to end their contracts—is that not firing? Does that not mean they'll be out of a job?"

"The people affected by this are women, people of colour, the most marginalised and the most vulnerable."

Mia from the Fractionals for Fair Pay group told the crowd that workers on casual contracts "are often working at several universities at once with no security".

"They work many more hours than they are paid for," she explained.

"Many have been kept on these contracts for several years, doing the



WORKERS AND students held an unofficial walkout and rally last Thursday

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

work of permanent staff but on much worse terms and conditions. They are eking out a precarious existence at the heart of our universities."

Workers who walked out said the attack was just the latest bad decision by management.

The anger has been brewing for years.

One UCU striker told Socialist Worker, "I'm a permanent member of staff but I'm walking out in solidarity with fractional staff."

"This is also about the general current situation and conditions at Soas."

"I've worked here for about 20 years and I've seen how management

decisions have accumulated to create financial problems. I think we can absolutely stop this attack."

Johnny Darlington, UCU branch secretary, told Socialist Worker, "Management has led to financial difficulties at Soas. They're prepared to spend thousands and thousands of pounds on buildings."

Completely

"But when it comes to supporting staff, management has completely failed."

And Soas Unison branch secretary Sandy said he was "glad to be part of such a magnificent walkout". "Staff

and students have united against this catastrophic management decision," he told Socialist Worker.

"It targets vulnerable workers on casual contracts, and these are more likely to be female and from black and minority ethnic backgrounds."

"The scale of the response shows that we can beat them. We have to beat them, because this is about what kind of education we want to have," he said.

On other pages...

The fight for trans rights
>>Pages 15&15

University director has plenty of cash for herself

SOAS bosses blamed a "challenging financial environment" for the attack on workers' conditions.

Soas had a £1.2 million deficit in 2017/18, £4.1 million below the surplus of £2.9 million it reported in 2016/17.

It hasn't yet published accounts for 2019/20.

But last summer, it said its "finances are healthy" and now has a projected surplus of 3 percent in 2022/23.

In general universities' income is going up.



Baroness Valerie Amos

Figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency published in 2018 showed a 2.7 percent rise in

income, or £915 million, between 2015/16 and 2016/17. Universities' income stood at £35.7 billion. They made a

surplus of £2.3 billion over the same period, and had total reserves of £44.27 billion, up from £12.33 billion in 2009/10.

Spending

The figures also showed that universities were spending more on buildings but less on staff.

In seven years, the percentage of expenditure on staff had dropped by 3.35 percent, but the percentage spent on capital expenditure had soared by 34.9 percent.

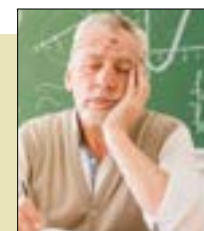
Soas director, Baroness

Valerie Amos, grabbed a basic salary of £234,099 in 2017/18.

She was also provided with accommodation at a rental value of £54,080. When pension costs were taken into account too, her total remuneration was £321,620.

UCU rep at City and Islington College Sean Vernell told a Soas rally last week that the money's there for education staff.

"Inside these institutions, don't fall for the lie there's no money, because there is," he said.



'Second class academics'

A REPORT released earlier this month said university workers on casual contracts are "second-class academics".

The UCU-commissioned report said casualised labour is "dehumanising" and makes workers invisible.

Higher Education Statistics Agency figures show that 67 percent of university researchers and 49 percent of teaching-only staff are on fixed term contracts.



Wave of strikes could return

STRIKES could soon hit universities across Britain over pensions, pay, contracts and conditions.

Union members across 60 universities held an eight-day strike in November and December last year.

Workers at 37 universities are rebalancing and the union could name new dates.



Student and staff solidarity

STUDENTS and workers at Soas held a "general assembly" following last week's walkout and rally.

They drew up more demands and planned the next steps.

For more information go to Fractionals For Fair Play on Facebook.

IN BRIEF

Heading for action on Woolwich ferry

WORKERS ON the Woolwich Ferry in south east London plan two walkouts.

The Unite union has called the strikes on the Thames River crossing for Friday 28 February and Friday 13 March.

Briggs Marine Ltd operates the ferry service on a contract to Transport for London.

Unite said that the latest dispute centres on the failure to pay the London Living Wage and changes to overtime.

Workers are also fighting bosses failure to adhere to the agreed job evaluation scheme and inability to deal with important equality issues.

Cranking up the car pay fightback

WORKERS WHO make crankshafts for car giants—including Ford and Peugeot—are at the “end of their tether” over pay.

Unite union members at the Darcast Crankshafts Ltd factory in Birmingham will be balloted for strikes from this week.

They receive a basic rate of £6.16 an hour—below the minimum wage—which is “topped up” through shift allowances.

Four walkouts are set at Dial-a-Ride

AROUND 600 workers at Transport for London were set to strike against a “derisory” 1 percent pay offer on Friday.

They include 300 workers on the Dial-a-Ride service and 300 revenue protection officers, road transport enforcement officers and compliance officers.

The workers, who are members of the Unite union, plan further 24-hour walkouts for 28 February, 27 March and 24 April.

Maintaining fair shift patterns

MAINTENANCE WORKERS at East Dunbartonshire Council have voted overwhelmingly for strikes over shift pattern changes.

The 60 Unite union members at the Scottish local authority work as plumbers, joiners and electricians.

They voted for strikes by 98 percent on an 80 percent turnout.

London Living Wage resistance is on

TRAFFIC WARDENS in Hackney, east London, plan to hold a week-long strike over pay from Friday 10 February.

The Unite union members, who are currently paid the London Living Wage of £10.75 an hour, are fighting for £15 an hour from April 2020.

The 40 traffic wardens voted by 81 percent for strikes.

HEALTH SERVICE

Cop threats at St George’s

SECURITY GUARDS at St George’s medical school in south London struck for a further three days from Monday.

The United Voices of the World (UVW) union members are in the middle of a programme of 15 days of strikes against outsourcing.

The workers, who are employed by Noonan, want to be brought back in-house.

Workers have faced repeated threats of arrest

from the cops. On Monday morning strikers were joined by Labour councillors and workers from the ongoing dispute against outsourcing at St Mary’s hospital in west London.

Sakina Sheikh, Labour councillor in Lewisham, south east London, said that strikers “are on the front line of the fight in London for better working conditions”.

●Donate to the strike fund at bit.ly/UVWStrikeFund



POLICE WERE called to the St George’s medical school strike again on Monday

PICTURE: UVW

EDUCATION

University staff could stage further strikes

by SADIE ROBINSON

MORE STRIKES could be called in universities across Britain this week, as reballots for action close in 37 UCU union branches.

Workers are fighting to defend their USS pension scheme and also for improvements to pay, contracts and workload.

They held a magnificent eight-day strike across 60 universities last year.

Reballots took place in branches that voted for walkouts but failed to meet the Tories’ 50 percent turnout threshold for strikes.

A special UCU conference in December voted for a further 14 days of strikes to defend the USS scheme.

Carlo Morelli is a UCU rep at Dundee University and is on the union’s national executive committee. He told Socialist Worker, “All signs are that the reballots are going very well. There’s momentum building for further action.”

“We need to keep up the action, and bring in more branches. And we should go with the conference decision and call 14 days of strikes.”

The union’s higher education committee was set to meet on Thursday of this week to discuss the next steps in the disputes. Some in the union argue that there should be “consultation” over the pay



Picket line at Goldsmiths university during the last strike

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

dispute. But activists in several UCU branches have passed motions calling on the union to keep fighting over pay and pensions simultaneously.

As UCU Left candidate for the union’s vice president Margot Hill said, “Uniting the fights in higher education gives us the best chance of winning.”

●For a full list of UCU branches that reballoted go to bit.ly/UCUBallotList

■ELECTIONS BEGIN in the UCU union on Friday of this week.

Socialist Worker is backing UCU Left candidate Margot Hill for UCU vice president, and a number of candidates for the union’s national executive

committee. Margot is a lecturer at Croydon College in south London. She is standing on a platform of building resistance to Tory attacks on education and workers’ conditions.

“Given the scale of attacks on our sector, coordinating and maximising action is essential,” she said.

The elections run until 4 March. Other UCU Left candidates include Bruce Baker, Roddy Slorach, Alan Barker, Jo McNeill, Julie Hearn, Sunil Banga, Saleem Rashid and Richard McEwan.

●Go to margot4vpucu.com and follow Margot’s campaign on Facebook at [margot4vpucu](https://www.facebook.com/margot4vpucu) and on Twitter at [@margot4vpucu](https://twitter.com/margot4vpucu)

HIGHER EDUCATION

‘Serious and sustained’ action for UCU

WORKERS AT the University of Liverpool’s central London campus could strike in a dispute over redundancy payouts.

UCU union members at the campus, which will close this year, are balloting for strikes.

They are angry at bosses’ refusal to match a previous

voluntary redundancy offer made to staff in Liverpool in 2018.

The union said this will cost a typical lecturer around £15,000.

The ballot ends on 14 February and the union has threatened “serious and sustained” action from April if necessary.

■UCU union members at Coventry university began a two-day walkout on Tuesday of this week

The union says that a new appraisals policy introduced in 2017 forces workers to “jump through unnecessary hoops to achieve an annual pay award that is standard at other institutions”.

SCHOOLS

East London school takes action against selloff scam

NEU UNION members at St Michael’s Catholic Primary School in Newham, east London, struck for three days last week to stop the school being turned into an academy.

Workers plan further walkouts next month and parents are also resisting the academisation plan.

They could be joined by NEU members at nearby St Bonaventure’s school, who are also fighting the same Multi Academy Trust.

Parents at St Michael’s school have set up a petition against the plan. They say, “If the school becomes an academy it will essentially become a business. The purpose of every business is to make money.”

Parents fear that academisation could see unqualified staff replace teachers to cut costs, and lead to cuts in support staff.

●Sign the petition against the academisation of St Michael’s school at bit.ly/stmichaelsnewham
Send messages of support to louise.cuffaro@neu.org.uk

■WORKERS AT a Newport school struck on Tuesday of this week in a dispute over a planned restructure. The NASUWT union members at Llanwern High School planned further walkouts on Thursday of this week, and a three-day strike from Tuesday 11 February.

They kicked off their industrial action with a walkout on Thursday 16 January.

Strikers say the restructure will harm children’s education. Newport City Council has said the restructure could lead to compulsory redundancies.

One worker said the school is already struggling to buy “essential classroom supplies”. NASUWT acting general secretary Chris Keates said teachers “cannot stand by while their jobs are placed in jeopardy”.

NASUWT members at Newport’s Caerleon Comprehensive School also plan strikes over a restructure on 6, 11 and 12 February.

CIVIL SERVICE

Cleaners say no to low pay

CLEANERS and maintenance workers and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in central London were set to strike for a month from Monday of next week.

The PCS union members are in a long-running battle over pay, working conditions and union recognition.

The workers want outsourcing company Interserve to compensate them from pay changes made when the company took over last year.

They also want a return to monthly salaries rather than daily pay and for cleaners not on permanent contracts to have their hours reinstated.

And they want Interserve to recognise their union.

The workers have already

taken 18 days of strikes since last March.

●Picket lines. Monday—Friday, 7:30am until 12 noon, King Charles Street, central London SW1A 2AH. Send messages of support to helenf@pcs.org.uk

■WORKERS AT a west London tax office were set to strike for two half days on Wednesday and Thursday followed by a full day on Friday this week.

The PCS union members at an HMRC office in Ealing are fighting against the closure and relocation of their workplace.

Strikers asked trade unions and campaign groups to show solidarity and bring banners to a rally on Thursday.

●12 noon at International House, 7 High Street, W5 5DJ

WESTEX CARPETS

Carpet workers say pile on the pressure

by TOMÁS TENGYEL-EVANS

THE RESOLVE of Westex carpet workers in West Yorkshire had not weakened as they began the tenth week of an all-out strike on Monday.

Unite union members at the carpet factory in Cleckheaton walked out on 20 November after bosses threatened a pay freeze.

The company had tabled a pay offer of 2.25 percent that would have resulted in the workers' bonus pay being incorporated into their hourly rate.

Kamran, a Unite union rep, told Socialist Worker, "We're still going strong and we're getting more courage."

"We've got lots of support."

Donations

Dave, another Unite rep, added, "The morale is good, we're getting support from people and donations to the strike fund."

"We had Huddersfield trades council and the Unite council branch come down with donations this morning."

Talks at the Acas conciliation service ended with bosses making no concessions.

Bosses plead poverty. But the firm had pre-tax profits of



WORKERS HAVE been striking since 20 November

PICTURE: MARTIN JONES

£5.4 million in 2018-19 and £5.16 million in 2017-18. Workers aren't benefiting. Kamran said, "Our basic pay is less than the minimum wage—the rest depends on bonuses and piece work."

Westex bosses are hoping to ride out the strike.

They were advertising job vacancies at the beginning of the industrial action and have

shipped in materials normally produced on site from outside. Kamran explained, "They are taking in yarn from other factories."

Dave said, "Unite has talked about broadening the action, maybe targeting the places that are supplying yarn to these companies. This would build pressure on bosses." A day of solidarity—with trade

unionists and campaigners from across Yorkshire—could also help to intensify the strike's impact.

A mass rally or picket of workers and supporters could halt deliveries of yarn from going into the factory and shut down production.

● Tweet messages of support to @KelvinImawer or email kelvin.mawer@unitetheunion.org

ROYAL MAIL

Don't let the bosses stop postal workers' walkouts

WORKERS AT several Royal Mail workplaces are set to start ballots for local strikes after bosses pushed ahead with major attacks on jobs and working conditions.

CWU union members in at least 15 workplaces, including Southend-on-Sea, Llanelli, Warrington and Fareham could soon strike.

Royal Mail bosses want to push ahead with changes that could see some workers sacked, and force others to work harder for longer.

These include closing some sorting centres and scrapping some sorting machines—costing jobs.

Parcels

Bosses also want to trial a second delivery for large parcels, done by existing workers whose current workload will be taken up by their colleagues.

And they want to bring in electronic gates to time to the second when workers start and finish.

The moves are part of a wider plan by Royal Mail chief executive Rico Back to smash up and run down the postal service.

His plans would cause at least 20,000 job losses.

CWU officials have been in talks with top Royal Managers since the end of last year. Postal workers had

already balloted for national strikes against the attacks, but the ballot was ruled unlawful in the High Court.

CWU deputy general secretary postal Terry Pullinger said if bosses pushed ahead with changes without the union's agreement they would ballot for national strikes again.

The union is currently checking its membership records in preparation for a national ballot.

In the meantime, Pullinger said workplaces affected by the changes should ballot for local action.

Yet bosses are using the threat of legal action to undermine the fightback.

Pullinger said that a new national ballot should be run with "less haste, more speed" to dodge a legal challenge. And he also warned workers against taking unofficial action after a court order was used against a wildcat strike in Bootle last year.

Bosses want to use the law to crush the CWU's tradition of taking unofficial action in defence of jobs and working conditions, and to delay national strikes.

CWU members and their leaders have to be ready to defy the law and strike anyway if it's used against them—not let bosses stop them fighting back.

PALESTINE SOLIDARITY



Activists are determined to keep up the fight

PICTURE: PSC

Defend the right to stand with Palestinian people

WE WILL continue to stand up for Palestine. That was the message as Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) members packed Conway Hall in London for their annual general meeting last Saturday.

It has been a challenging year with continuing slurs of antisemitism directed at many pro-Palestinian activists.

But the PSC has continued to grow. As well as its general work, it has organised marches for the Palestinians' right of return to the areas they were expelled from in 1948. And it has held Israel Apartheid Week activities in 30 universities. It has held

events boycotting Puma and HSBC for their support for the Israeli state.

A particular focus agreed for 2020 was to counter the attack on boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaigns by the Boris Johnson government.

Omar Barghout, a founder member of the BDS movement, gave an international perspective and inspired conference to fight on.

Miriam Scharf

● A new East London PSC branch will be launched with Palestinian speakers on 7 Feb, 7pm, Durning Hall, E7 9AB

SOCIAL CARE

Services brought in-house after action hits Sirona

IN A welcome victory for the defence of public services, adult social care services are coming back into the control of the local council in Bath and North East Somerset.

Three residential care homes and five extra care housing schemes run by outsourcer Sirona are due to be placed under council control, it was announced last week.

"With all services being farmed out, it's good to have something brought back in-house," Andy McGuinness, Unison union rep, told Socialist Worker.

"There's a positive mood among the workforce that it will be run as a public service," he said.

The firm gave a 12-month

notice that it was quitting last September as the operation was "financially unsustainable".

Sirona's move followed a protracted dispute which saw hundreds of low-paid workers strike back against the firm's cost-cutting measures.

It threatened to sack workers and re-engage them on contracts that included an unpaid 30-minute break.

Because the length of shifts wasn't changed, this would have left workers "owing" bosses hours—and essentially working for free.

Andy said Sirona's decision to cancel its contract was "absolutely" impacted by workers' solid strikes. "Sirona didn't want to take us on again," he said.

RAIL

Big vote for more strikes on South Western Railway

FURTHER STRIKES are planned on South Western Railway (SWR) after workers voted overwhelmingly for more action.

The RMT union members have fought for over two years. In the latest ballot workers voted by 82 percent for strikes on a 59 percent turnout.

Workers staged 27 solid days of strikes in December.

Guards are fighting the imposition of driver-only operated services, which threaten their jobs and passenger safety.

SWR workers have shown incredible determination in fighting these dangerous plans through several periods of strikes. They cannot stop there.

It's time to escalate. The strikes will be more effective if the RMT brings out station

staff alongside guards. And there should be solidarity action from the Aslef train drivers' union.

Last week Tory transport secretary Grant Shapps said that SWR was "not sustainable in the long term". But rather than taking the obvious step of renationalisation he asked the failing private franchise owners to submit a proposal for another contract.

■ CATERING WORKERS at Rail Gourmet are set to walk out again this week.

The RMT union members, based at the Paddington depot in west London, were set to strike on Thursday and Friday.

They are fighting rostering practices, the incorrect payment of allowances and bonuses and the failure to replace faulty equipment.

France

'WE CAN'T GIVE IN TO MACRON'

by CHARLIE KIMBER

A HUGE day of strikes and demonstrations in France on Friday has reinvigorated the battle against attacks on pensions. Another day of national action was set for Wednesday this week.

More than 50 days since the fight against president Emmanuel Macron's assault began, millions of workers are still ready to struggle.

The seventh day of national action on Friday last week came after indefinite strikes ended on the RATP Paris public transport system and on most of the rail network.

But the latest day of action saw both the RATP and national rail services severely disrupted.

Striking teachers, hospital workers, refinery workers, dockers, firefighters and others joined mass marches. The CGT union federation said that nationally 1.3 million people took part.

Between 350,000 and 400,000 people marched



WORKERS HOLDING a banner declaring, 'in struggle—strike, demonstrate, blockade'

PICTURES: O PHIL DES CONTRASTES

in Paris. It was perhaps the biggest demonstration so far in the battle against Macron's attempt to make most people work longer for a lower pension.

There was a militant determination to show that

the struggle is not over. As a demonstration of around 60,000 began in the northern port city of Le Havre, power workers triggered electricity cuts against businesses.

This was in defiant response to government

denunciation of such tactics. Macron criticised what he called "the acts of violence and the radicalism of certain blockade tactics".

He also called for "the utmost firmness towards their perpetrators". Marie, a

striking teacher, told Socialist Worker, "People have been fighting for so long—particularly on the railways.

"We can't give in now, but some of the union leaders will and others won't fight to the end. It's great that

different strikers are coming together across the unions. We need more of that—and to keep drinking the spirit of the Yellow Vests."

Friday was chosen for the day of action because it saw the pension changes presented to the Council of State, the last step before it goes to parliament on 17 February.

The Council of State, a thoroughly establishment body, criticised the pension law as "imprecise" and "patchy".

It said that it had been given insufficient time to study the bill. But Macron is pushing on—and so are the protesters.

"Our determination remains intact," Yves Veyrier, head of the Force Ouvrière union, told reporters ahead of the march in Paris. "We have weeks, months of protest ahead of us."

This week's action—called by four of the union confederations and four student and high school unions—has to be the launchpad for more sustained strikes.

Workers pile pressure on trade unions to strike

THERE IS a definite "hardening up" at the core of those who are involved, and new forces are entering the fray.

University students, who have played a relatively minor role in the battles so far, have begun to be more visible.

And teachers and school students are also bringing together the fight over pensions with the battle against a new school "continuous testing" regime known as E3C.

Student boycotts and workers' action have combined to cancel exams in some areas.

This has boosted the pensions fightback. A rank and file group of



Metro and rail workers marching together

rail and RATP strikers is increasingly taking independent initiatives, chasing down ministers and lobbying union leaders. One sign of

the political ferment at the base of the unions is the decision of some members of the CFDT union federation to tear up their membership cards.

They are angry that their leaders have backed off from the fight.

Franc Bugnoni, a technician, explained, "The battle against the CFDT and Macron feel like the same fight, I'm returning my card".

Another striker denounced CFDT leaders, saying they are "turncoats—I'm leaving".

There is also a broader political feeling.

One of the most popular slogans is, "Metro, work, grave—no".

The big question is what will come next. Last Friday was very successful, but it cannot be just an episode.

It has to be followed up by indefinite strikes.

Anti-closure occupation

WORKERS AT the Luxfer gas cylinder plant near Clermont-Ferrand in France have occupied their factory against closure. They are part of a group that is linked to the old British Aluminium, Alcan and Alcoa.

One of the occupiers told Socialist Worker, "We want to keep this place working, but the English have decided to make sure it ends.

"We are occupying to prevent the bosses from sabotaging the machines.

"Pension strikes, Yellow Vests, our occupation—it's all part of wanting a better life. And my daughter

is part of the climate change movement.

"We want something better than we have now."

Union rep Axel Peronczyk said, "This area is becoming an industrial wasteland. If people find new jobs they are precarious and low paid. Management have treated us with contempt."



A Luxfer occupier